

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
HOLLISTER FIELD OFFICE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
DOI-BLM-CA-0900-2009-013-EA  
FLPMA Lands Sale (Lower Uvas Ridge)**

**DATE INITIATED:** October 1, 2008

**CONTROL NUMBER:** DOI-BLM-CA-0900-2009-013-EA

**CASE FILE/SERIAL NUMBER:** CACA 50168 04

**PROPONENT:** BLM

**PROJECT:** FLPMA Lands Sale (Lower Uvas)

**LOCATION:** Santa Clara County

**AFFECTED ACREAGE:** 23.42 acres

**USGS 7.5' QUADRANGLE:** Loma Prieta

**LAND STATUS:** Public

**SPECIAL DESIGNATION AREA:** NA

**AUTHORITY:** Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLPMA),

**LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE:**

The proposed action is subject to and in conformance with the Record of Decision for the Hollister RMP for the Southern Diablo Mountain Range and Central Coast of California (2007) (aka the Hollister RMP) in accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-3. The management plan provides “the goal for lands and realty management is to provide lands, interests in land, and authorizations for public and private uses while maintaining and improving resource values and public land administration.”

To achieve the goal for lands and realty management, the following objectives are established:

- Make public land available for disposal that meets the disposal criteria contained in Section 203(a) of the FLPMA;

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS, PROGRAMS, AND POLICIES**

On July 25, 2000, Congress passed the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), which authorized the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to retain a percentage of the funds received from land sales to use to purchase private lands in federally designated areas. The BLM is considering a number of lands sales in the Hollister Field Area to implement the RMP and raise funds to acquire land as authorized by FLTFA.

BLM began processing land sales using funds from the FLTFA land acquisition account. The Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA) authorization expired on July 25, 2011 and currently has not been reauthorized so the funds from the sale of these lands would be deposited directly to the U.S. Treasury.

This environmental assessment addresses the proposed sale of 23.42 acres located in Santa Clara County (T10S, R2E, Sec. 5, Lots 2).

## **CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL ZONING AND GENERAL PLAN:**

Correspondence was submitted to the County offices on October 14, 2008 and no adverse comments were received concerning any planning or zoning issues.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:**

The purpose of the proposed action is to transfer small parcels of public lands into private ownership. The proposed action is needed to dispose of lands which are difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands.

The sale would implement a major goal of the RMP, to improve management of public lands, by disposing of scattered parcels while potentially raising funds which could be used to acquire lands in areas where Federal management for recreation and resource enhancement is appropriate.

## **RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES:**

### **Alternative 1: Proposed Action**

The proposed action is a competitive bid sale of an approximately 23.42 acre public land parcel described as: T. 10 S., R. 2 E., Section 5, Lot 2, Mount Diablo Meridian. Maps of the parcel proposed for sale are attached to the end of this EA.

The sale would be conducted through GSA auction services and the highest bidder would purchase the parcel from the United States (U.S.) for not less than \$135,000 which is the fair market value of the land. The sale would include the conveyance of both the surface and mineral estate, although the U.S. would retain reservation for ditches and canals.

## **Alternative 2: No Action**

The proposed land sale would not be undertaken. Existing management and use of the site would continue subject to applicable statutes, regulations, policy and land use plans.

The Federal land parcel would continue to be available for disposal as directed, in the RMP. Other sales or exchange opportunities would be considered in order to benefit acquisition of private property within a designated managed unit identified in the RMP. The Federal lands would remain open to the location of mining claims and locatable mineral development and other public land laws (subject to BLM regulations).

## **Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail:**

BLM considered other public lands in Santa Clara County for possible sale. In evaluating other public lands for possible sale, the BLM considered such factors as conformance with the Hollister RMP, expected land values, market interest, physical and legal access, existing resource issues and information and management efficiencies. Ultimately the public lands BLM is proposing for sale at this time were selected for the following reasons: 1) the lands were identified for disposal in the 1984 Hollister RMP and remain available for sale under the 2007 Hollister RMP revision, 2) existing resource information indicated the lands had no important resource values, 3) and the lands had no physical or legal public access. BLM may in the future consider other public lands for sale that were not considered in detail in this environmental assessment.

At this time, BLM believes a competitive sale is the best way to achieve BLM's management objectives and, based on the lack of public interest, BLM does not believe direct sale of the public lands described above is an alternative requiring further consideration.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

Affected Critical Element	Yes	No	Affected Critical Element	Yes	No
Air Quality		X	Native American Values		X
ACEC/RNA		X	Special Status Species		X

Affected Critical Element	Yes	No	Affected Critical Element	Yes	No
Cultural Resources		X	Vegetation		X
Environmental Justice		X	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Water Quality (ground/surface)		X
Fish and Wildlife		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Floodplains		X	Wild & Scenic Rivers		X
Invasive Weeds		X	Wilderness		X

The following elements of the human environment, subject to review specified in statute, regulation or executive order, are not located within the project area: Ecologically Critical Area, Floodplains, Prime or Unique Farm Lands, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, and Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. (ACEC).

### **Lands & Realty**

The Hollister Field Office administers approximately 284,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands, primarily located in Monterey, San Benito, and western Fresno counties. Many of the other public lands managed by the Hollister Field Office in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Alameda, Contra Costa, Stanislaus, and Merced counties consist of small, scattered parcels with little to no public access and are commonly used for unauthorized activities such as illegal dumping, illicit drug operations, and some limited non-motorized recreational opportunities (i.e. hunting, target shooting, etc.).

In 2007, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Hollister Resource Management Plan (RMP) providing guidance for management of public lands administered by the Hollister Field Office. The RMP identified the need to pursue land tenure adjustments to ensure more efficient management of the public lands, to reduce conflicts with other public and private landowners, and to provide more consistency and logic in land use patterns within the Hollister Resource Area.. As a result, the 2007 ROD identifies a total of approximately 46,500 acres of public lands for disposal in Section 3.12.2. Figures 22-27 in the 2007 ROD show where these parcels are located.

The 2007 ROD also directs BLM to acquire lands with high resource values, including biological resources and recreation opportunities, especially in special management areas, including wilderness study area (WSAs) and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). Other management actions, including LTEN-C5, LTEN-C6, & LTEN-C7 (ROD, pg. 3-37), describe stipulations for public lands available for disposal and other provisions for acquiring lands from willing sellers to enhance management efficiency or to contribute to the fulfillment of resource management goals and objectives.

## **Air Quality**

The parcel is located within the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. The entire air basin currently exceeds the PM 2.5 and ozone attainment standard. The ozone generation is due to a chemical reaction between reactive organic gases and oxides of nitrogen. PM 2.5 is a result of dust generating activities, such as agricultural, vehicle use on unpaved roads and other ground surface disturbances.

## **Water Quality**

Surface waters occur in an unnamed intermittent drainage that converges with Uvas Creek down slope along the southwest corner of the parcel. There are no known listed surface or ground water impairments which affect this parcel.

## **Soils**

No official soil survey exists for western Santa Clara County. Soils of the parcel are generally mapped as at Gaviota-Vallecitos-Los Gatos complex. Slope on much of the parcel is steep, but well-vegetated. Soil erosion hazard is moderate to very high.

## **Biological Resources**

### **Fish and Wildlife**

The Lower Uvas Ridge parcel is undifferentiated expanses of dense chamise chaparral and interspersed with foothill pines. Wildlife on the parcel are those species expected in coastal chamise chaparral/mixed woodland habitat, including Columbia black tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionis*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), coyote (*Canis latrans*) and various small mammals, songbirds, reptiles, and insects

### **Vegetation**

The Lower Uvas parcel contains three primary vegetation series including chamise, woolyleaf manzanita, and knobcone pine (Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf 1995).

### **Special Status Species**

According to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), no listed plant species are known to exist on the Lower Uvas Ridge parcel. No listed plant species were observed on the parcel during the site visit in early spring. Records of CNPS list 1B Loma Prieta hoita (*Hoita strobilina*) and robust monardella (*Monardella villosa* ssp. *globulosa*) exist for localities approximately 1 mile south of the parcel. No Loma Prieta hoita, robust monardella, or other CNPS list 1B plant species were observed on the parcel during the site visit.

No federally-listed animal species are known to occur within 5 miles of the site. No aquatic habitat for California red-legged frogs or California tiger salamander is located on the site, and the steep chaparral terrain provides no suitable upland habitat for either species.

### **Noxious and Invasive Plants**

No noxious and invasive plants are known to be present within the parcel.

### **Cultural Resources and Native American Values**

Expected cultural resource types in this region are prehistoric habitation sites attributed to the Costanoan/Ohlone California Indians or historic logging and/or homestead sites from the 19th and early 20th centuries. There are no known Native American values associated with this particular parcel.

### **Environmental Justice**

No minority communities or low income communities are located within or adjacent to the proposed project areas.

### **Hazardous or Solid Wastes**

An Environmental Preliminary Analysis was completed on December 1, 2009 by Hollister Field Staff. No evidence of “recognized environmental conditions” (RECs) was discovered.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES:**

### **Alternative 1: Proposed Action**

#### **Lands & Realty**

The proposed action would provide minor long-term benefits BLM's lands and realty program because it would allow the Hollister Field Office to dispose of a scattered parcel that is difficult and uneconomic to manage as part of the public lands. The proposed land sale would also support a major goal of the RMP, to improve management of public lands.

Overall, the proposed actions would have a major long-term beneficial impact on lands and realty administration because it would assure more efficient management of public lands, reduce conflicts with other public and private landowners, and provide more consistency and logic in land use patterns within the Planning Area.

#### **Air Quality**

There would be no direct impacts to air quality from the proposed sale of public lands because no emissions would be generated by the proposed action. Indirect impacts to air quality from development and use of the parcel would be negligible due to the relatively small-size and remote location of the public lands being considered for disposal.

#### **Water Quality**

There would be no direct impacts to water quality from the proposed sale of public lands because the only stream segment on the parcel is an intermittent seasonal drainage that does not support surface flows during most years. Indirect impacts to water quality from development and use of the parcel would be negligible due to the relatively small-size and remote location of the public lands being considered for disposal.

#### **Soils**

If some portion of the property is developed, the development would be expected to result in some negative impacts to soils through vegetation removal, soil compaction, and soil erosion.

#### **Biological Resources**

##### **Fish and Wildlife**

If some portion of the property is developed, the development would be expected to result in some minor negative impacts to wildlife habitat.

## **Vegetation**

If some portion of the property is developed, the development would be expected to result in some permanent vegetation loss.

## **Special Status Species**

Due to the absence of federally-listed species on or near the site, the proposed action would have no effects on special status species that occur in the region.

## **Noxious and Invasive Plants**

Development may increase the risk of noxious and invasive species introduction. No change in noxious and invasive species presence or abundance would be expected.

## **Cultural Resources and Native American Values**

There are no known archeological or cultural resources within the Area of Potential Affect (APE). The Proposed Action would not adversely affect archeological, cultural, or Native American values.

## **Environmental Justice**

The proposed action would not result in disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority communities.

## **Hazardous or Solid Wastes**

Due to the absence of any hazardous or solid wastes from the site, no impacts would be expected from the land sale.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

No mitigation measures have been identified.

## **Alternative 2: No Action**

Under the no action alternative, the public land would not be sold through a competitive bid, but would still be available for disposal in the RMP. No active BLM management is anticipated. Santa Clara's County tax base would not benefit from the transfer of these lands.



## CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are those impacts on the environment which result “from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions.” (40 CFR 1508.7). In this case, past and presently on-going actions and activities in the project vicinity include the following:

BLM is considering a number of lands sales in the administrative boundary of the Hollister Field Office. Specifically, the Hollister Field Office is considering 15 parcels of land for disposal that total 528.96 acres of public lands that would potentially be sold through competitive bid or direct sale. The proposed sale of 89.25 acres of public lands on two other parcels nearby to the Santa Clara Open Space District is addressed in two separate environmental assessments (DOI-BLM-CA-0900-2009-12 and DOI-BLM-CA-0900-2009-14).

In analyzing cumulative impacts, BLM considered existing environmental information as a relevant baseline for considering future impacts and has not attempted to list past actions in the area. The baseline information identified in the affected environment (above) is considered sufficient for determining the significance of cumulative effects and for making a reasoned choice between alternatives.

BLM has also not attempted to exhaustively list all present and reasonably foreseeable private actions, but has considered a summary of planned development from Santa Clara County’s General Plan (1994). The parcel proposed for sale is in the Uvas Creek watershed and the impacts of the proposed sale are primarily relevant or important only within this region.

The appropriate geographic area for considering cumulative effects is based on whether the incremental impacts of the proposed sale would be felt locally, regionally or nationally. The incremental impact of increased water usage, although difficult to quantify, would also most likely be limited to the Uvas Creek watershed. Incremental impacts to biological resources would be negligible because the existing condition of the parcel would remain unchanged. The incremental impacts on aesthetics/visual resources would also be negligible because the existing condition of the parcel would remain unchanged.

The Final EIS (2006) determined cumulative impacts from management of lands and realty are limited to indirect on-the-ground impacts on other resources such as aesthetics, water quality, and biological resources that would occur as a result of land use authorizations. These impacts, combined with impacts from previous land acquisitions and improvements as well as the existing land uses and impacts, would cause localized and permanent cumulative impacts on those resources. These impacts are described in each respective resource section of Chapter 4.

Potential off-site impacts, if any, are expected to be minor and would largely depend on the public lands disposals and acquisitions carried through. For example, acquisitions of areas with high recreation potential could result in off-site impacts on local access roads. Additionally, land use authorizations, including communications, utility corridors, and energy development, could also result in off-site impacts on local access roads.

Overall, these land tenure adjustments would have a long-term beneficial effect on BLM's lands and realty program because they would promote management efficiency and improve opportunities for multiple use management of public lands.

## **REFERENCES**

Sawyer, J. O., and T. Keeler-Wolf. 1995. A manual of California vegetation. California Native Plant Society. Sacramento, California, USA. 471 pp.

## **CONSULTATION**

Santa Clara County Open Space Authority – Patrick Congdon, General Manager  
Local Property Owners  
US Fish & Wildlife Services  
Native American Heritage Commission- Sacramento, CA

## **LIST OF PREPARERS**

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## **NOTIFICATION**

Notification of the proposed action and analysis has been posted on the Hollister Field Office web page during its undertaking.

## **DOCUMENT REVIEW**

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Planning and Environmental Coordinator

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Date





